



Skipton

Choral

Matters

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Editorial

Autumn again. The Spring and Summer concerts have receded well into the past, while the next on 9 December still seems quite far off. Fortunately under Robert Webb's expert and inspiring guidance, and with Jerry's nimble fingers aiding and abetting, all seems to be going well - choir numbers and audience size keeping steady, standards of performance likewise or better, and a fine concert in preparation. We are sadly losing Debbie as our Secretary, but it is excellent that Toni Davis has come forward to replace her with considerable experience of music management in Bermuda.

This is the last time the Newsletter will appear. The Committee has decided in its infinite wisdom, and with a very laudable desire to avoid burdening people's inboxes with superfluous nonsense, that publication should cease after this edition. One reason was the paucity of input from choir members - I recall just three contributions over the seven editions: Lucy Irven's piece on the Skipton Food Bank, Angela Cox's spotting of 'Ten Reasons for Joining a Choir', and Tony Colgrave's Family Fun Quiz, and there have sadly been none this time. So now it's goodbye to Yorkshire composers, to items of dubious interest or amusement or for the archive, to Sally's photos, and to quizzes (though a final, simple one appears in this edition, and there are

still a few in the locker if anyone is interested). As a parting contribution, in recognition of the kindly response from faithful readers to the seven previous editions, I include a lengthy item under the suggestive title "*The Chaos*". May it bring a smile to your lips, and perhaps a lump to your throat.

Wearing my Trustee's hat, and with the agreement of Sally Goodman as Chair of Trustees, I would like to add an invitation to members of the choir to volunteer to become Trustees. I think Susan Broadhead and David Jones, who did so earlier in the year, will assure anyone interested that the task does not impose unduly heavy burdens. But it is important, as the Trustees have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that we comply with the law and with our charitable objectives, meeting just three times a year (or more if necessary) to do so. There are vacancies, which will need to be filled at the AGM on 28 January, so now is the time to start considering who might come forward. Please think about it and if willing, or in doubt, have a word with Sally.

Robert Flower

Chairman's column

The choir continues to progress well under Robert Webb's leadership, with a well attended concert in July. Unfortunately the cost of soloists meant that we did not make a profit. The revue was complimentary (thank you Charlie) as was the rousing ovation for Charlie's playing.

We were all greatly saddened by the sudden death of Charlie's wife Jane; it is a tribute to her and the amount she did in the community that the service at Holy Trinity was packed out. Also a new member, Ken Martin, was taken ill while on holiday. We wish him all the best for his recovery.

After more than three years stalwart service, Debbie has decided to step down as Secretary at the end of the choir year. She brought an amazing amount of detail and professionalism to the job, for which we are grateful. Happily, Toni Davies has agreed to take up the reins and will start at the AGM.

The SP&F scheme has not proved the success we had hoped for, despite a great deal of effort, with only 2 Sponsors, 6 Patrons (some Joint), and 2 Friends. After discussion the committee decided to ask existing supporters if they would like to continue, but not to promote the scheme further for the time being.

The numbers of members remains pretty steady at 64, but as ever a few more tenors and basses would be welcome - the sopranos and altos represent approximately 2/3rds of the choir, with a high standard of musical ability and knowledge.

Although there was a lot of goodwill from Keelhams for our carol-singing in 2016 & 2017, the time slot that they could give us was after the mezzanine cafe had closed, and the store was not busy. We put in a lot of effort for little return. This year we secured an afternoon slot at Tesco's, and hope this will be more fruitful.

Tom Knapp

Music Director's column

Taking on board a choral society had not been part of the plan. It was a most unexpected phone call in the Spring of 2017 from Sally Goodman (Committee Chair at the time) asking me to take over as MD from September last year. I was excited for the new challenge, but also then immediately started running through what on earth I was going to get SCS to sing, having only taken one rehearsal and conducted the Christmas concert in 2016!

It has taken a while to strike a balance between exciting, affordable and achievable programmes. The Armed Man (Nov 2017) was an unquestionable success, but subsequent programmes earlier this year, having been chosen before even my first rehearsal, were perhaps too hard to sing or hard to sell, or both. The committee and I now have a much better handle on what the choir should be trying to achieve in its programming after a year of working together, and, beginning with Magnificat in December, I think we have a series of excellent concerts lined up over the next 12 months or so that will be attractive to choir and audience alike.

Robert Webb

Yorkshire composers: Sir William Sterndale Bennett (1816-75)

The sixth and last in a series of notes about composers born or practising in Yorkshire.

Bennett was born on 13 April 1816 in Sheffield, the third child and only son of Robert Bennett, the organist of Sheffield parish church. In addition to his duties as an organist, Robert Bennett was a conductor, composer and piano teacher; he named his son after whose poems the elder Bennett had set to 27, and his father, after remarrying, died in three, Bennett was brought up in grandfather, John Bennett, from whom he John Bennett was a professional bass, unified) choir of King's, St John's and had a fine alto voice and entered the choir 1824. In 1826, at the age of ten, he was Music (RAM), which had been founded in impressed by the child's talent that they board.



At the RAM, c1832

Bennett was a pupil at the RAM for the wish his principal instrumental studies studied the piano, and after five years, with his grandfather's agreement, he took the piano as his principal study. He was a shy youth and was diffident about his skill in composition, which he studied under the principal of the RAM, William Crotch, and then under Cipriani Potter, who took over as principal in 1832.

his friend William Sterndale, some of music. His mother died in 1818, aged 1819. Thus orphaned at the age of Cambridge by his paternal received his first musical education. who sang as a lay clerk in the (then Trinity colleges. The young Bennett of King's College Chapel in February accepted into the Royal Academy of 1822. The examiners were so waived all fees for his tuition and

next ten years. At his grandfather's were at first as a violinist, but he also studied the piano, and after five years, with his grandfather's agreement, he took the piano as his principal study. He was a shy youth and was diffident about his skill in composition, which he studied under the principal of the RAM, William Crotch, and then under Cipriani Potter, who took over as principal in 1832.



Aged 35

Bennett did not study singing, but when the RAM mounted a student production of *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1830, Bennett, aged fourteen, was cast in the mezzo-soprano role of the page boy Cherubino (usually played by a woman *en travesti*). This was among the few failures of his career at the RAM, described by *The Harmonicon*, as "in every way a blot on the piece".

By the age of twenty, he had begun to make a reputation as a concert pianist, and his compositions received high praise. Among those impressed by Bennett was Felix Mendelssohn, who invited him to Leipzig. There Bennett became friendly with Robert Schumann, who shared Mendelssohn's admiration for his compositions. Bennett spent three winters composing and performing in Leipzig.

In 1837 Bennett began to teach at the RAM, with which he was associated for most of the rest of his life. For twenty years he taught there, later also teaching at Queen's College, London. Amongst his pupils during this period were Arthur Sullivan and Hubert Parry. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s he composed little, although he performed as a pianist and directed the Philharmonic Society for ten years. He also actively promoted concerts of chamber music. From 1848 onwards his career was punctuated by antagonism between himself and the conductor Michael Costa.

He returned to composition in 1858, but his later works, though popular, were considered old-fashioned and did not arouse as much critical enthusiasm as his youthful compositions. He was Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge from 1856 to 1866. In that year he became Principal of the RAM, rescuing it from closure, and remained in this position until his death. He was knighted in 1871. He died in London in 1875 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.



Bennett had a significant influence on English music, not solely as a composer but also as a teacher, as a promoter of standards of musical education and as an important figure in London concert life. In recent years, appreciation of Bennett's compositions has been rekindled and a number of his works, including a symphony, his piano concerti, some vocal music and many of his piano compositions, have been recorded. In his bicentenary year of 2016, concerts of his music look place in countries all over the world.

Other Yorkshire composers, summaries of whose lives and careers can still be shared with our readers on request, are:

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

Frederick Delius (1862-1934)
 Sir Edward Bairstow (1874-1946)
 Sir George Dyson (1883-1964)
 George Butterworth (1885-1916)
 Gerald Finzi (1901-56)
 Harry Mortimer (1902-92)
 Kenneth Leighton (1929-88)
 Philip Moore (b. 1943)

Sumer is icumen in

Going back some centuries, to music composed ages before Sterndale Bennett, not to mention Vaughan Williams and Rutter, we have probably all sung the Round which starts:

Sumer is icumen in
 Lhude sing cuccu
 Growth sed
 And bloweth med
 And springth the wud anew:
 Sing cuccu!

This dates from the 13th Century and is one of the earliest pieces of music known today. The ancient score (see right) takes a bit of interpreting; but in a modern setting, the song's words and melody have a jauntiness and simplicity which still have great appeal.

Less well-known however is Ezra Pound's parody on it, "Ancient Music". It shares the earthiness of the original, with a distinctly American tinge. I hope you will enjoy it - and will overlook the poet's mild blasphemy.

ANCIENT MUSIC by Ezra Pound (from *Lustra* 1913-1915)

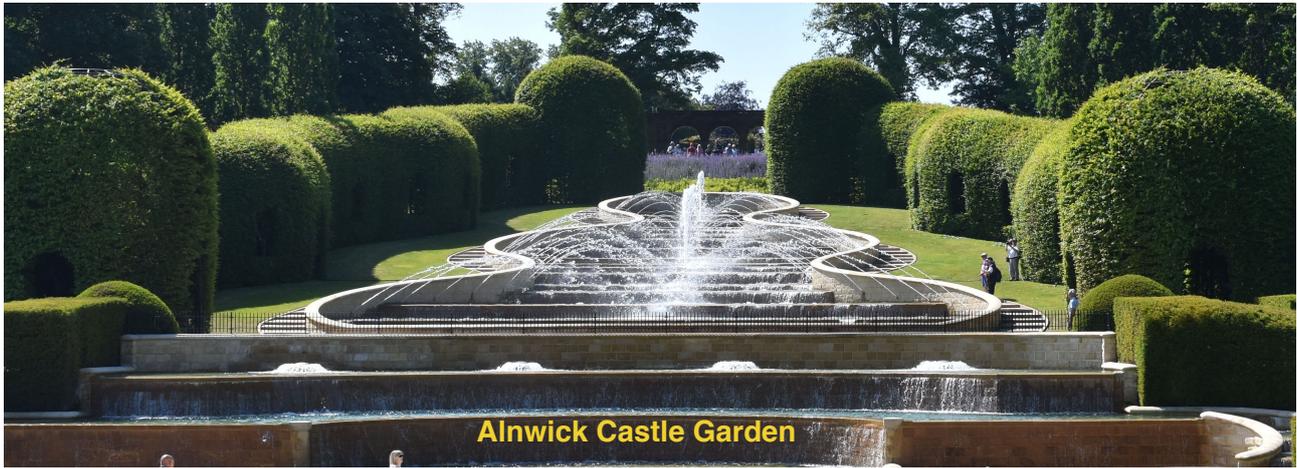
Winter is icummen in,
 Lhude sing Goddamm.
 Raineth drop and staineth slop,
 And how the wind doth ramm!
 Sing: Goddamm.

Skiddeth bus and sloppeth us,
 An ague hath my ham.
 Freezeth river, turneth liver,
 Damn you, sing: Goddamm.

Goddamm, Goddamm,
 'tis why I am, Goddamm,
 So 'gainst the winter's balm.

Sing goddamm, damm, sing Goddamm.
 Sing goddamm, sing goddamm, DAMM.





Quotations from . . .

Can anyone say (preferably without electronic assistance!) which historic figure made the following observations? A clue: the monarch of the day greatly approved of him, and might have been amused by his comments.

“People complain of the instability of human affairs, but in fact the state of man, if fixed and certain, would not be endured.”

“Persons who are foolish enough to do that which requires admonition are rarely wise enough to refrain from the practice for which they are admonished.”

“I am very good-tempered if I have my way; and that is not saying little for myself. For many are just as ill-tempered when their wishes are complied with as when they are thwarted.”

“Misfortunes are often accidents, yet the calamities inflicted on us by the hand of God are very few in proportion to those which come from our own errors.”

“If you have a bad habit the best way to get out of it is to take your fill of it.”

“Many a very false man has a very open and sincere manner, and vice versa”; and “xxx had that very open, honest manner which is never to be trusted.” [*Think also “one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.”* (Hamlet)]

“In youth we are anxious to affect the gravity and experience of age, and in age, still more vainly, the spirit and gaiety of youth.”

“I would rather have a man about me when I am ill, I think it requires strong health to put up with a woman.” [*An opinion he later revised.*]

“What all the wise promised has not happened, and what all the damned fools said would happen has come to pass.” (*Said about the Irish Question - but it seems relevant today too.*)

Another quote, from his biography by Lord David Cecil, which may help suggest his identity:

“Well now, tell me - what do you want to be?” he asked the youthful Disraeli, flamboyant in satin trousers and ornate black ringlets. “I want to be Prime Minister,” replied Disraeli. [- - -] was taken aback; odd as he realised that the new England was likely to be, he could not conceive of it being so odd as to make such an eventuality at all possible. Genially he tried to warn the queer entertaining young man not to place his ambitions quite so high.”

Final clue, to the approximate date: around the year when these observations were made, the following events took place:

- the Royal Academy of Music was granted its charter;

- Mendelssohn wrote his *Reformation Symphony*, and Berlioz his *Symphonie Fantastique*; and
- the first performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* since the composer's death was given with Mendelssohn as conductor.

Who was he, and what important public positions did he hold? Answer below *



The Four Seasons (Cragside, Northumberland)

"The Chaos"

This tour de force was written by Dutch writer, traveller and teacher Gerard Nolst Trent (1870-1946), for his 1920 textbook "Drop your Foreign Accent: engelsche uitspraakøefeningen" [English pronunciation exercises]. Not bad for a non-native speaker, you may think (perhaps he never came to Yorkshire).

Dearest creature in Creation, studying English pronunciation,
I will teach you, in my verse, sounds like corpse, corps, horse and worse.
It will keep you, Susy, busy, make your head with heat grow dizzy;
Tear in eye, your dress you'll tear, and so shall I! Oh hear my prayer,
Pray console your loving poet, make my coat look new, dear, sew it;
Just compare heart, beard and heard, dies and diet, lord and word,
Sword and sward, retain and Britain (mind the latter, how it's written!).
Made has not the sound of bade; say - said; pay - paid; laid, but plaid.

Now I surely will not plague you with such words as vague and ague,
But be careful how you speak: say break, steak, but bleak and streak.
Previous, precious; fuchsia, via; pipe, snipe, recipe and choir;
Cloven, oven; how and low, script, receipt, shoe, poem, toe.

Hear me say, devoid of trickery, daughter, laughter and Terpsichore,
 Typhoid, measles, topsails, aisles; exiles, similes, reviles;
 Wholly, holly; signal, signing; Thames, examining, combining.
 Scholar, vicar and cigar, solar, mica, war and far.

From "desire", desirable; admirable from "admire"; lumber, plumber; bier but brier;
 Chatham, brougham, renown but known, knowledge; done, but gone and tone,
 One, anemone, Balmoral, kitchen, lichen, laundry, laurel;
 Gertrude, Germany, wind and mind; scene, Melpomene, mankind;
 Tortoise, turquoise, chamois-leather, reading, Reading, heathen, heather.
 This phonetic labyrinth gives moss, gross, brook, ninth, plinth.
 Billet does not end like ballet; bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet;
 Blood and flood, are not like food. Nor is mould like should and would.

Banquet is not nearly parquet, which is said to rhyme with "darkey" [*not very PC!*].
 Viscous, viscount; load and broad; toward, to forward, to reward;
 And your pronunciation's OK when you say correctly croquet.
 Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve; friend and fiend, alive and live;
 River, rival; tomb, bomb, comb; doll and roll, and some and home.
 Liberty, library; heave and heaven; Rachel, ache, moustache; eleven.
 We say hallowed, but allowed; people, leopard, towed but vowed.

Mark the difference, moreover, between mover, plover, Dover;
 Leeches, breeches; wise and precise. Chalice but police and lice.
 Camel; constable, unstable; principle, disciple; label;
 Petal, penal and canal; wait, surmise, plait, promise; pal.
 Suit, suite, ruin; circuit, conduit rhyme with "shirk it" and "beyond it",
 But it's surely hard to tell, why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall. [*Pell Mell in posh-speak*]
 Muscle, muscular, gaol; iron; timber, climber, bullion, lion;
 Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair, senator, spectator, mayor.
 Ivy, privy; famous, clamour and enamour rhyme with "hammer".
 Pussy, hussy and possess; desert, but dessert, address.

Golf; wolf; countenance, lieutenants; hoist, in lieu of flags, left pennants.
 River, rival, tomb, bomb, comb; doll and roll and some and home.
 Stranger does not rhyme with anger, neither does devour with clangour.
 Soul, but foul and gaunt but aunt; font, front, wont; want, grand and grant,
 Shoes, goes, does. Now first say finger, and then singer, ginger, linger
 Real, zeal, mauve, gauze and gauge; marriage, foliage, mirage, age.
 Query does not rime with very, nor does fury sound like bury.

Dost, lost, post and doth, cloth, loth; job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath
 Thought the difference seems little, we say actual but victual.
 Seat, sweat, chaste, caste; Leigh, eight; height; put, nut, granite but unite.
 Reefer does not rime with "deaffer", feoffer does, and zephyr, heifer.
 Hint, pint; senate, but sedate; dull, bull, and George ate late.
 Scenic, Arabic, pacific; science, conscience, scientific.
 Liberty, library, heave and heaven, Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven.
 We say hallowed, but allowed, people, leopard, towed, but vowed.

Mark the differences, moreover, between mover, cover, clover;
 Leeches, breeches, wise, precise, chalice, but police and lice;
 Camel, constable, unstable, principle, disciple, label.
 Petal, panel, and canal, wait, surprise, plait, promise, pal.
 Tour but our, and succour, four; gas, alas and Arkansas !
 Sea, idea, guinea, area, psalm: Maria but malaria;
 Youth, south, southern; cleanse and clean; doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian, dandelion with battalion,
 Sally with ally: yea, ye, eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay!
 Say aver but ever, fever, neither, leisure, skein, receiver.
 Never guess -it is not safe. We say calves, valves, half but Ralph [*pr. rafe*]!
 Hero; granary, canary; crevice and device, and eyrie;
 Face but preface, but efface, phlegm, phlegmatic; ass, glass, bass;
 Large, but target, gin, give, verging; ought, out, joust and scour, but scourging;
 Ear, but earn; and wear and tear do not rime with "here" but "ere".

Seven is right, but so is even; hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen;
 Monkey, donkey; clerk and jerk; asp, grasp, wasp; and cork and work.
 Pronunciation - think of psyche! Is a paling stout and spiky?
 Won't it make you lose your wits, writing "groats" and saying grits?
 It's a dark abyss or tunnel, strewn with stones, like rowlock, gunwale,
 Islington and Isle of Wight, housewife, verdict and indict.
 Though, through, plough, cough, hough, or tough? Hiccough has the sound of "cup"...

My advice is - give it up!

* **William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne, 1779-1848 ("Lord M")**
 Home Secretary 1830-34,
 Prime Minister 1834 and 1835-41

Singing in Flanders

Most of us will remember Toby Wardman, our Director of Music from 2013 - 2016. With him we sang four very successful concerts, featuring Rutter's Requiem, Stainer's Crucifixion, and many other memorable, varied and stimulating works both sacred and secular. And we had a lot of fun!

Toby left us, following the Brexit referendum, to live and work in Brussels - and his guest column in last April's Newsletter informed us that his and Rosanna's new daughter, Tabitha, was developing "excellent breath control, an impressive vocal range, and a great sense of rhythm (every two hours all night)".



Recently, in one of her Rehearsal Notes, Debbie included Toby's invitation to take part in "a few days exploring historic Flemish churches and cathedrals, singing good music and sampling world heritage beers." Some of our members have signed up, and we have just heard from Toby's partner Rosanna that the tour is **now fully booked**, with singers from all over the UK and also the Netherlands and China! From now on a waiting list is in operation for anyone who wants to register their interest. This can be accessed at <https://flemishevensong.co.uk>, or by email to rosanna@flemishevensong.co.uk.